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218
MAY
IT CAN'T BE!
DAREDEVIL
--IS THE JESTER?!

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

"ALL MY LAURELS YOU HAVE RIVEN AWAY..."

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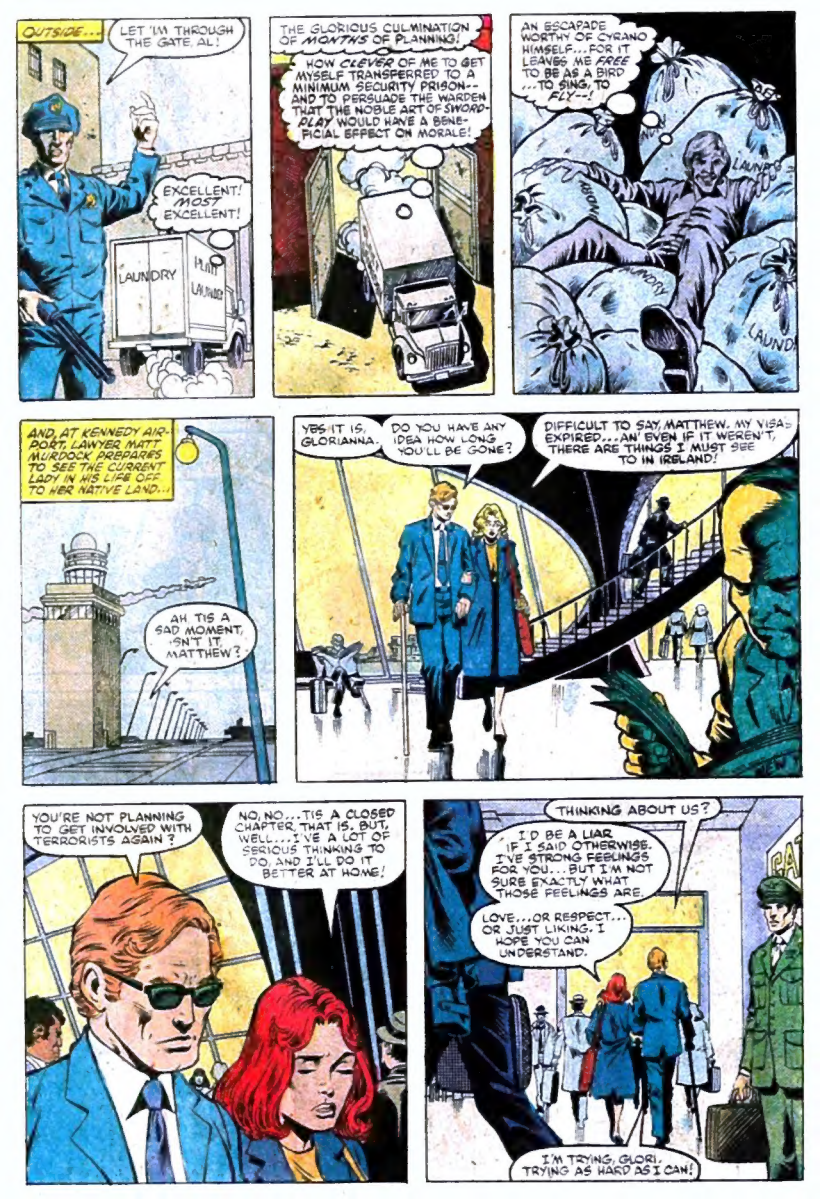
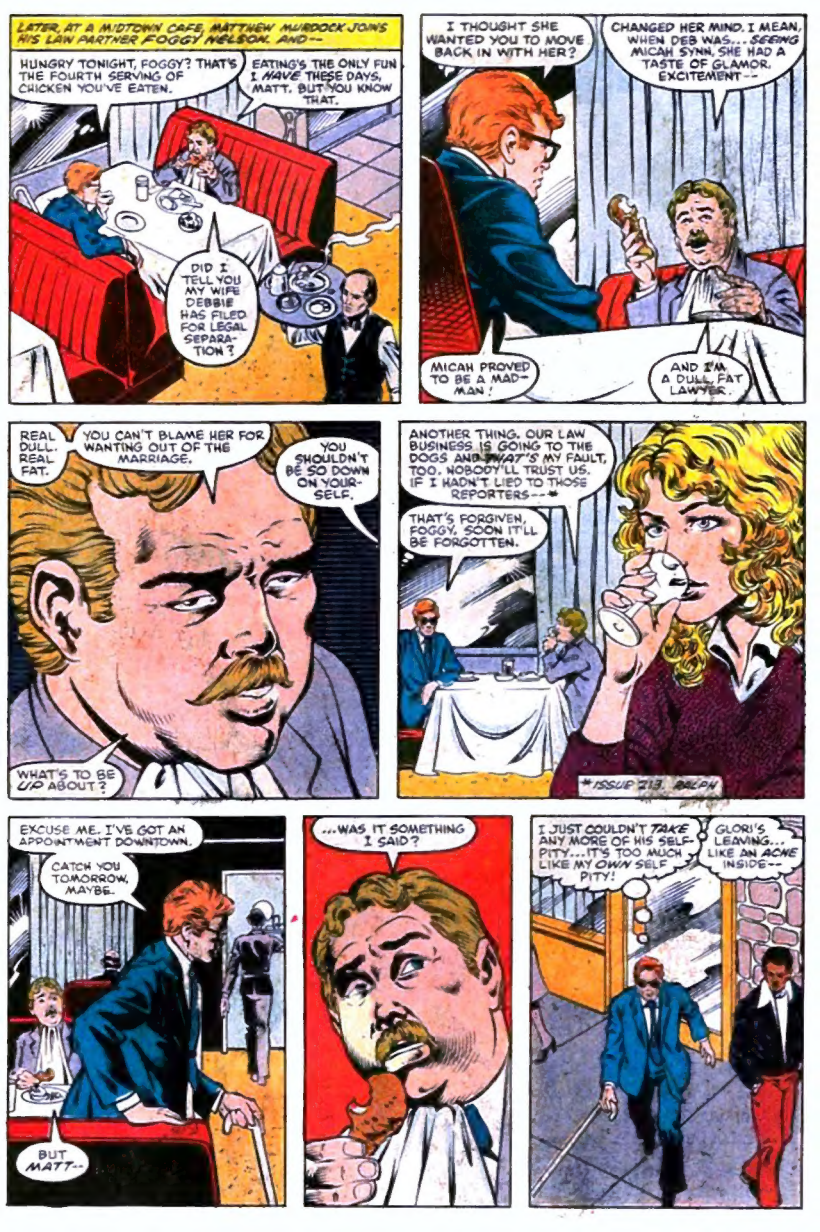
SO MAY THE TURN OF A HAND FORESTALL LIFE WITH ITS HONEY, DEATH WITH ITS GALL: SO MAY THE TURN OF MY FANCY ROAM FREE FOR A TIME, TILL THE RIMES RECALL...
SHEEZ... WHEN THE WARDEN TALKED ME INTO THIS FENCING STUFF, HE DIDN'T TELL ME I'D HAVE TO LISTEN TO YOU MOUTHING OFF!
THE JESTER AIN'T DOIN' TOO GOOD TODAY... WITH THE POETRY OR THE SWORD!
IT'S A LOTTA NONSENSE, YOU ASK ME... A FENCING PROGRAM FOR CONVICTS!
THE WARDEN WAS NUTS TO LET THE JESTER TALK HIM INTO IT.
HANNIGAN'S DOING OKAY THOUGH, AIN'T HE?
HANNIGAN OUGHTTA. ON THE OUTSIDE, HE CUT UP FOUR GUYS WITH A SWITCHBLADE.
OKAY, YOU TWO-- TIME'S UP!
I EVER SEE YOU ONNA STREET, I'M GONNA SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE FOR REAL!
REMIND ME TO BE SCARED LATER, HANNIGAN.
HEY... YOU AIN'T THE JESTER! WHERE IS HE?
I'M NOT EXACTLY SURE.
HE PAID ME FOUR CARTONS OF CIGARETTES TO TAKE HIS PLACE... SAID HE'D MAKE IT FIVE IF I SAID THOSE WORDS FROM THAT PLAY HE'S ALWAYS READING!

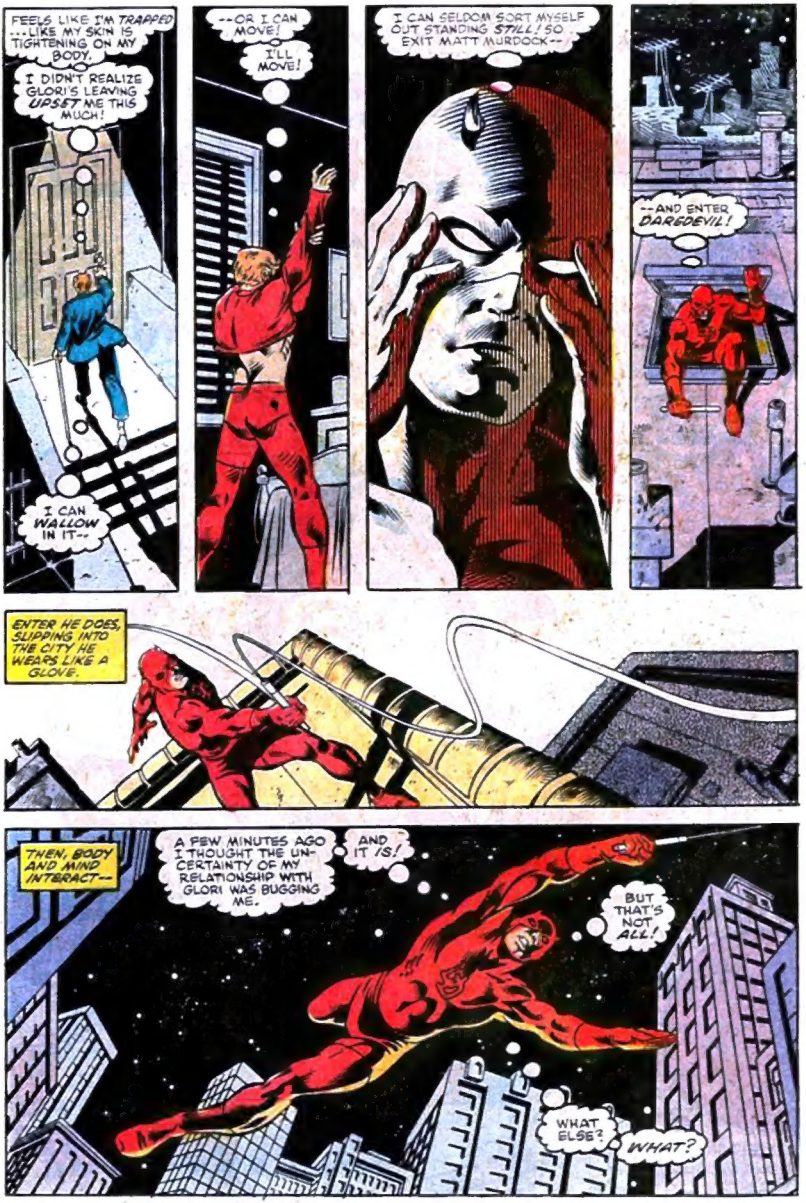

OUTSIDE...
LET 'IM THROUGH THE GATE, AL!
EXCELLENT! MOST EXCELLENT!
LAUNDRY
PLANT LAUNDRY
THE GLORIOUS CULMINATION OF MONTHS OF PLANNING!
HOW CLEVER OF ME TO GET MYSELF TRANSFERRED TO A MINIMUM SECURITY PRISON--AND TO PERSUADE THE WARDEN THAT THE NOBLE ART OF SWORD-PLAY WOULD HAVE A BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON MORALE!
AN ESCAPADE WORTHY OF CYRANO HIMSELF...FOR IT LEAVES ME FREE TO BE AS A BIRD ...TO SING, TO FLY--!
AND, AT KENNEDY AIRPORT, LAWYER MATT MURDOCK PREPARES TO SEE THE CURRENT LADY IN HIS LIFE OFF TO HER NATIVE LAND...
AH 'TIS A SAD MOMENT, 'ENT IT MATTHEW?
YES IT IS, GLORIANNA.
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW LONG YOU'LL BE GONE?
DIFFICULT TO SAY, MATTHEW. MY VISA EXPIRED...AN' EVEN IF IT WEREN'T, THERE ARE THINGS I MUST SEE TO IN IRELAND!
YOU'RE NOT PLANNING TO GET INVOLVED WITH TERRORISTS AGAIN?
NO, NO...'TIS A CLOSED CHAPTER, THAT IS, BUT, WELL...I'VE A LOT OF SERIOUS THINKING TO DO, AND I'LL DO IT BETTER AT HOME!
THINKING ABOUT US?
I'D BE A LIAR IF I SAID OTHERWISE. I'VE STRONG FEELINGS FOR YOU...BUT I'M NOT SURE EXACTLY WHAT THOSE FEELINGS ARE.
LOVE...OR RESPECT...OR JUST LIKING. I HOPE YOU CAN UNDERSTAND.
I'M TRYING, GLORI. TRYING AS HARD AS I CAN!

AER LINGUS FLIGHT 23 NOW BOARDING...
I GUESS WE'D BETTER SAY GOODBYE.
OH, MATTHEW ...I DO CARE FOR YOU!
...LIKE NEW YORK, MR. LAFORGE?
EXCITING, VIBRANT, THRILLING...A LIVING PULSE OF ENERGY--THAT, TO ME, IS THIS GLITTERING PARNASSUS MANHATTAN.
ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO PERFORMING ON CABLE TELEVISION?
I GLOW WITH ANTICIPATION--
--AND I AM CERTAIN THAT THE CYRANO DE BERGERAC I SHALL DO BEFORE THE LIVE CAMERAS NEXT WILL BE MY GREATEST TRIUMPH!
AH, BUT WAIT--
--ONE OF THE HANDICAPPED. I MUST SPEAK WITH HIM.
I SYMPATHIZE WITH YOU, SIR. FOR I ONCE PLAYED OEDIPUS REX--TO SPLENDID REVIEWS--AND I COMPREHEND THE PLIGHT OF THE BLIND.
YOU KNOW OEDIPUS REX?
YEAH. HE LOVED HIS MOTHER.
A LOT.
DROLL.
I BID YOU FAREWELL, SIR.
COME, MY DEAR. THE ARMS OF THE CITY ARE STRETCHED WIDE IN WELCOME.
AND THE THUMB OF THE CITY IS POISED TO JAB YOU IN THE EYE... I HOPE.

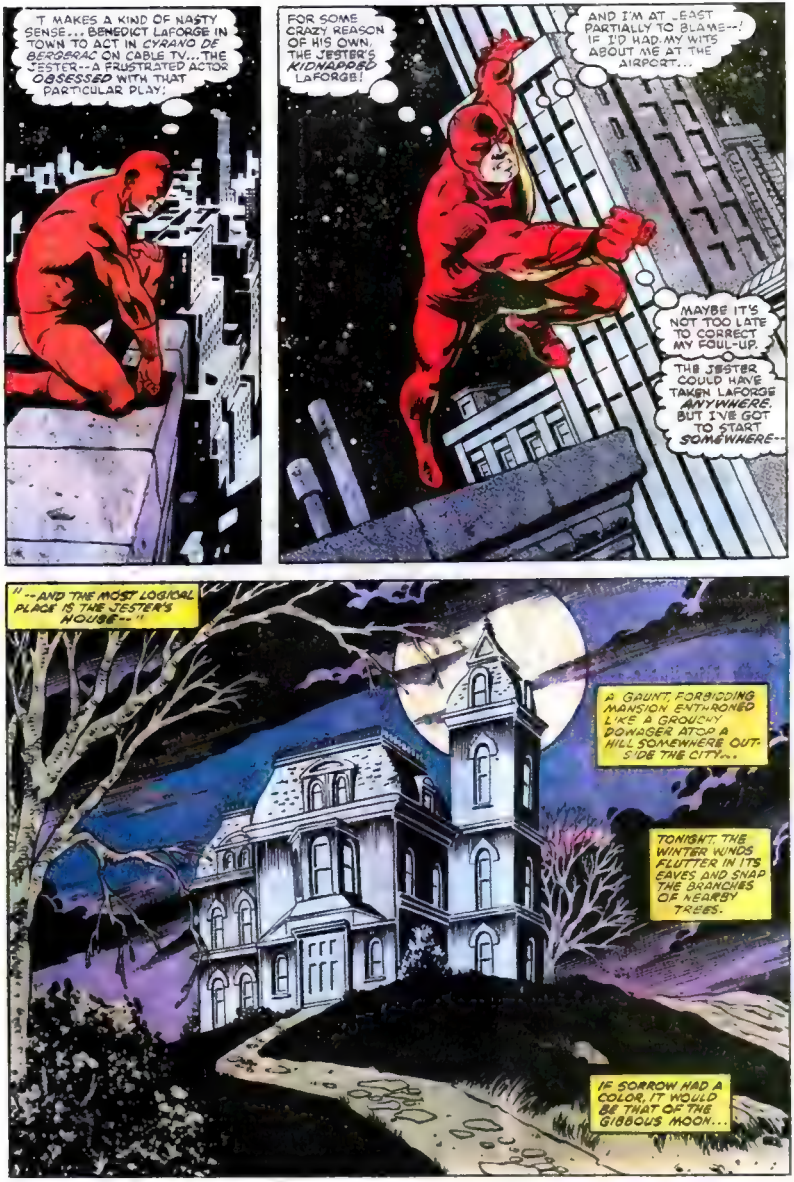
THEN, IN FRONT OF THE TERMINAL--
MR. LAFORGE... OVER HERE!
YOUR LIMO'S WAITING, MR. LAFORGE!
HEY...LAFORGE IS MY FARE!
GUESS AGAIN, PALLY! THE TELE-VISION STATION SENT ME TO PICK UP THE GREATEST ACTOR OF MODERN TIMES.
RIDING WITH HIM WILL BE THE GREATEST HONOR OF MY LIFE!
YOU, MY DEAR FELLOW, ARE A MAN OF IMPECCABLE MANNERS, AND CONSIDERABLE GRACE.
HE'S A DOLL, AWRIGHT.
SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THAT DRIVER'S VOICE...
I KNOW I'VE HEARD IT SOMEWHERE BEFORE.
BUT I GUESS I'VE HEARD HALF THE VOICES IN NEW YORK SOMEWHERE BEFORE.
TAXI, MISTER?
MANHATTAN, THE EAST SIDE.
HOPE YA DON'T MIND MY SAYIN' SO...BUT YOU LOOK LOUSY.
I FEEL LOUSY!

AS MATT MURDOCK TRAVELS TOWARD MANHATTAN, ANOTHER JOURNEY IS ENDING IN BROOKLYN...
AN OUTRAGE, YOU MISERABLE BLACKGUARD--
ACE
--THIS IS AN ASSAULT UPON THE DIGNITY OF THE THEA--
MMMPFG
SILENCE, LaFORGE, YOU MOUTHER, YOU WRETCHED EXCUSE FOR A PLAYER.
COUNT YOURSELF BLESSED THAT I SHALL PREVENT YOU FROM DESECRATING THAT GREATEST OF DRAMAS, THE DIVINE CYRANO.
WHEN YOU SAY YOUR PRAYERS OF THANKS-- AS YOU CERTAINLY SHOULD-- SAY THAT YOUR FOLLY WAS PREVENTED BY--
--THE JESTER!
NOW, ADIEU! I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT TO KEEP... AN APPOINTMENT WITH GREATNESS!


LATER, AT A MIDTOWN CAFE, MATTHEW MURDOCK JOINS HIS LAW PARTNER FOGGY NELSON. AND--
HUNGRY TONIGHT, FOGGY? THAT'S THE FOURTH SERVING OF CHICKEN YOU'VE EATEN.
EATING'S THE ONLY FUN I HAVE THESE DAYS, MATT. BUT YOU KNOW THAT.
DID I TELL YOU MY WIFE DEBBIE HAS FILED FOR LEGAL SEPARATION?
I THOUGHT SHE WANTED YOU TO MOVE BACK IN WITH HER?
CHANGED HER MIND. I MEAN, WHEN DEB WAS... SEEING MICAH SYNN, SHE HAD A TASTE OF GLAMOR, EXCITEMENT--
MICAH PROVED TO BE A MAD-MAN!
AND I'M A DULL, FAT LAWYER.
REAL DULL. REAL FAT.
YOU CAN'T BLAME HER FOR WANTING OUT OF THE MARRIAGE.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE SO DOWN ON YOURSELF.
WHAT'S TO BE UP ABOUT?
ANOTHER THING. OUR LAW BUSINESS IS GOING TO THE DOGS AND IT'S MY FAULT, TOO. NOBODY'LL TRUST US, IF I HADN'T LIED TO THOSE REPORTERS--*
THAT'S FORGIVEN, FOGGY. SOON IT'LL BE FORGOTTEN.
*ISSUE 213. RALPH
EXCUSE ME. I'VE GOT AN APPOINTMENT DOWNTOWN.
CATCH YOU TOMORROW, MAYBE.
BUT MATT--
...WAS IT SOMETHING I SAID?
I JUST COULDN'T TAKE ANY MORE OF HIS SELF-PITY... IT'S TOO MUCH LIKE MY OWN SELF PITY!
GLORI'S LEAVING... LIKE AN ACHE INSIDE--


FEELS LIKE I'M TRAPPED --LIKE MY SKIN IS TIGHTENING ON MY BODY.
I DIDN'T REALIZE GLORI'S LEAVING UPSET ME THIS MUCH!
I CAN WALLOW IN IT--
--OR I CAN MOVE!
I'LL MOVE!
I CAN SELDOM SORT MYSELF OUT STANDING STILL! SO EXIT MATT MURDOCK--
--AND ENTER DAREDEVIL!
ENTER HE DOES, SLIPPING INTO THE CITY HE WEARS LIKE A GLOVE.
THEN, BODY AND MIND INTERACT--
A FEW MINUTES AGO I THOUGHT THE UNCERTAINTY OF MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GLORI WAS BUGGING ME.
AND IT IS!
BUT THAT'S NOT ALL!
WHAT ELSE?
WHAT?

THE AIRPORT?
YES, THE AIRPORT. AFTER GLORI LEFT--
--I HEARD OR SENSED OR SMELLED SOMETHING--
--THAT SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN THERE!
THAT'S WHAT'S EATING AT ME!
BUT I WAS DISTRACTED BY THE GLORI THING. I WASN'T PAYING ATTENTION.
GOT TO REMEMBER--
--BUT I JUST CAN'T!
THEN SUDDENLY, HE DOES!
THE VOICE!
THE LIMO DRIVER'S VOICE! IT WAS DISGUISED, BUT I KNOW IT!
IT WAS THE VOICE OF THE JESTER!


IT MAKES A KIND OF NASTY SENSE... BENEDICT LAFORGE IN TOWN TO ACT IN CYRANO DE BERGERAC ON CABLE TV... THE JESTER--A FRUSTRATED ACTOR OBSESSED WITH THAT PARTICULAR PLAY!
FOR SOME CRAZY REASON OF HIS OWN, THE JESTER'S KIDNAPPED LAFORGE!
AND I'M AT LEAST PARTIALLY TO BLAME--! IF I'D HAD MY WITS ABOUT ME AT THE AIRPORT...
MAYBE IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO CORRECT MY FOUL-UP.
THE JESTER COULD HAVE TAKEN LAFORGE ANYWHERE. BUT I'VE GOT TO START SOMEWHERE--
"--AND THE MOST LOGICAL PLACE IS THE JESTER'S HOUSE--".
A GAUNT, FORBIDDING MANSION ENTHRONED LIKE A GROUCH DOWAGER ATOP A HILL SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE THE CITY...
TONIGHT, THE WINTER WINDS FLUTTER IN ITS EAVES AND SNAP THE BRANCHES OF NEARBY TREES.
IF SORROW HAD A COLOR, IT WOULD BE THAT OF THE GIBBOUS MOON...

FAR AWAY A CLOCK STRIKES MIDNIGHT AS DAREDEVIL ENTERS--
SMELL OF LEATHER, GUN OIL, FINGERPRINT POWDER. THE POLICE HAVE ALREADY BEEN HERE.
THEY MUST KNOW THE JESTER'S ON THE LOOSE--
--HAVEN'T RELEASED THE NEWS YET.
BUT THEY DEPEND ALMOST ENTIRELY ON SIGHT. SO THEY MAY HAVE MISSED SOMETHING.
IT WON'T DO ANY HARM FOR ME TO GIVE THE PLACE A QUICK ONCE OVER.
WALLS SEEM TOO CLOSE TO EACH OTHER, CONSIDERING THE HOUSE'S EXTERIOR DIMENSIONS.
THAT COULD MEAN--
...SECRET PASSAGEWAYS...?
SOUND OF WOOD SCRAPING AGAINST WOOD--
--OBJECTS HURLED TOWARD ME--
ME HAS BEEN BLIND FOR YEARS. AT MOMENTS LIKE THESE, THAT IS NOT A DISADVANTAGE.
TLAK
TLAK
TLAK

THE JESTER HAD IT FIGURED RIGHT! HE SAID IF WE WAITED LONG ENOUGH, FANCY PANTS'D SHOW!
LET'S START EARNIN' THAT BONUS HE PROMISED.
YOU GENTLEMEN ARE AMONG THE JESTER'S PRISON ACQUAINTANCES, I PRESUME.
HE HAS BEEN SIGHTLESS SINCE A CHILDHOOD ACCIDENT, BUT HIS REMAINING SENSES ARE TRAINED TO PERFECTION AND HIS PHYSIQUE IS FULLY DEVELOPED.
THE STEEL MISSES.
HE DOES NOT.
SLICK... FAST... NEAT. I HEARD YOU WAS HANDY.
WELL, I AIN'T GONNA MAKE THE MISTAKE OF GETTIN' NEAR YA! I DON'T HAVETA--

--I'LL LET THIS TOY OF THE JESTER'S DO MY WORK FOR ME!
SOUND--SMALL ELECTRIC ENGINE RADAR SENSE--AIRCRAFT SHAPED OBJECT COMING AT ME.
SLOWLY, NO PROBLEM GETTING OUT OF THE WAY.
EH--? IT'S VEERING AROUND... MUST HAVE A HOMING DEVICE BUILT-IN... A HEAT-SEEKER PROBABLY.
PICKING UP SPEED... I CAN'T KEEP DODGING FOREVER.
EVENTUALLY IT'LL NAIL ME--
--UNLESS I GIVE IT ANOTHER TARGET
TIMING HAS TO BE VERY GOOD, DUCK... LET ITS MOMENTUM CARRY IT PAST--
H-H-HEY
--TO WHERE ITS SENSORS CAN HOME IN ON ANOTHER HEAT SOURCE!

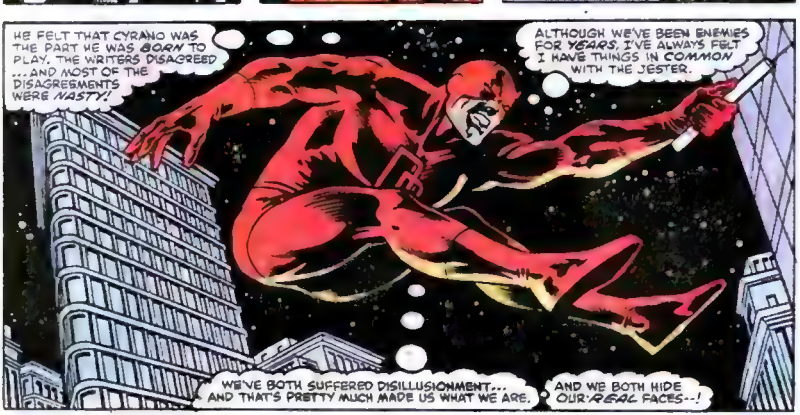
GEE-YOWTCH!
THAT DIDN'T SOUND FATAL! JUST EMBARRASSING.
EH--?
READY TO 'AVE A BALL, MATEY?
TOMP
TOMP
TOMP
TOMP
WOT THESE HERE ARE IS PLASTIC! SPECIAL PLASTIC! HARD AS STEEL, THEY ARE!
WOT THEY DO IS BOUNCE!
AND BREAK!
LIKE BONES!
BLAM BLAM
HE'S RIGHT, IT IS HARD!

THEN--
I MIGHT TELL THE POLICE WHERE YOU ARE. OR I MIGHT NOT. COULD BE WEEKS BEFORE YOU'RE FOUND!
WANT TO TALK TO ME? ABOUT THE JESTER?
NO SENSE THREATENIN' US, MASKED MAN, 'CAUSE WE GOT NOTHIN' TO GIVE YA!
ALL HE SAID WAS THAT HE WAS GONNA SHOW THE WORLD... THE CRITICS--

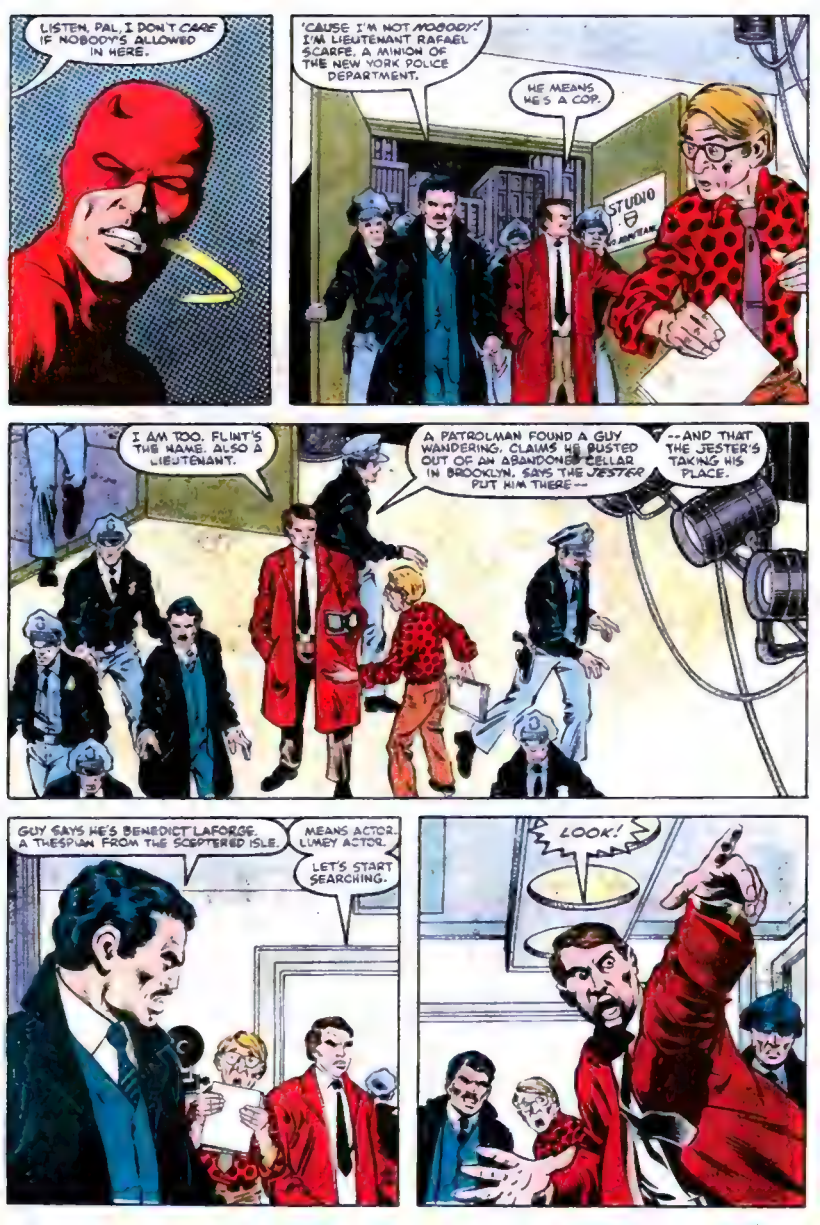
--GONNA BE THE DEFINITIVE SOMEBODY-OR-OTHER!

OF COURSE.
THE DEFINITIVE CYRANO DE BERGERAC--

--WHAT HE'S BEEN DRIVEN TO BE--
--EVER SINCE THE CRITICS SAVAGED HIS PERFORMANCE OF THE ROLE YEARS AGO!


HE FELT THAT CYRANO WAS THE PART HE WAS BORN TO PLAY. THE WRITERS DISAGREED... AND MOST OF THE DISAGREEMENTS WERE NASTY!
ALTHOUGH WE'VE BEEN ENEMIES FOR YEARS, I'VE ALWAYS FELT I HAVE THINGS IN COMMON WITH THE JESTER.
WE'VE BOTH SUFFERED DISILLUSIONMENT... AND THAT'S PRETTY MUCH MADE US WHAT WE ARE.
AND WE BOTH HIDE OUR REAL FACES--!

I DO NOT DRESS UP LIKE A POPINJAY; BUT, INWARDLY, I KEEP MY DAINTINESS. I DO NOT BEAR WITH ME, BY ANY CHANCE, AN INSULT NOT YET WASHED AWAY--
THAT'S THE JESTER!
A CONSCIENCE YELLOW WITH UNRUSSED BILE--AN HONOR FRAYED TO RAGS, A SET OF SCRUPLES BADLY WORN. I GO CAPARISONED IN GEMS UNSEEN
TRAILING WHITE PLUMES OF FREEDOM
THAT'S NOT LAFORGE, BUT WHOEVER HE IS HE'S GOOD.
BETTER THAN GOOD! THE GUY'S--
BRILLIANT!
I'VE NEVER HEARD ACTING OF SUCH RAW POWER!
IF I STOPPED HIM, I'D BE PUNISHING THE AUDIENCE... DEPRIVING THEM OF A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCE.
THE JESTER WON'T GO ANYWHERE TILL AFTER THE SHOW. I'LL NAB HIM THEN.
MY FRIEND, I HAVE MY BITTER DAYS--
KNOWING MYSELF SO UGLY, SO ALONE.
A HEAP OF CLOTHING IN THE CORNER... WITH THE JESTER'S ODOR ON IT!
HIS COSTUME?


LISTEN, PAL. I DON'T CARE IF NOBODY'S ALLOWED IN HERE.
'CAUSE I'M NOT NOBODY! I'M LIEUTENANT RAFAEL SCARFE, A MINION OF THE NEW YORK POLICE DEPARTMENT.
HE MEANS HE'S A COP.
STUDIO
I AM TOO. FLINT'S THE NAME. ALSO A LIEUTENANT.
A PATROLMAN FOUND A GUY WANDERING, CLAIMS HE BUSTED OUT OF AN ABANDONED CELLAR IN BROOKLYN, SAYS THE JESTER PUT HIM THERE--
--AND THAT THE JESTER'S TAKING HIS PLACE.
GUY SAYS HE'S BENEDICT LAFORGE, A THESPIAN FROM THE SCEPTERED ISLE.
MEANS ACTOR, LUMEY ACTOR.
LET'S START SEARCHING.
LOOK!

HIYA, FELLAS! COME TO VISIT ME?
HEE HEE HEE.
IT'S NOT EVEN MY BIRTHDAY!
BUT I'LL PLAY WITH YOU ANYWAY.
PLAY TAG WITH ME IF YOU'RE SWIFT.
'CAUSE IF YOU DON'T I'LL BE MIFFED.
THE VERSE STINKS.
SO DOES HE.
GET HIM!

C'MON, FUZZIE-WUZZIES... CATCH ME!
GEMAN... RABINOWITZ ...CIRCLE AROUND THE OTHER WAY--
BLOCK ALL THE EXITS!
WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO? SEEK THE PATRONAGE OF SOME GREAT MAN AND LIKE A VINE ON A TALL TREE CRAWL UPWARD WHERE I CANNOT STAND ALONE?
FROM THE EXPRESSION ON THAT ENGINEER'S FACE, THE PERFORMANCE IS STILL GREAT.
I'VE SUDDENLY REALIZED... I'M ENJOYING THIS!
WHERE'D HE GO?
IF THAT BOZO'S ESCAPED--
FUZZIE-WUZZIE, YOU MEAN OL' BEAR COME AND NAB ME IF YOU DARE!

FEELS WEIRD... WEARING ANOTHER MAN'S COSTUME. I'VE GOT A SECRET IDENTITY ON TOP OF A SECRET IDENTITY.
WONDER WHY THE JESTER LEFT HIS CLOWN SUIT LYING AROUND. AS A GOOD LUCK CHARM, MAYBE?
DOING THIS MAKES ME REALIZE THAT WE'RE EVEN MORE ALIKE THAN I THOUGHT! IN A WAY, I'M ALSO AN ACTOR--!

I ASK YOU ONLY THIS--THAT WHEN THE GREAT COLD GATHERS ROUND MY BONES YOU GIVE A DOUBLE MEANING TO YOUR WIDOW'S WEEDS AND THE TEARS YOU LET FALL FOR HIM MAY BE FOR A LITTLE-- MY TEARS...

WE GOT 'IM NOW.
EXIT
IN ANOTHER FEW SECONDS--

--THEY CAN HAVE ME!

YES, ALL MY LAURELS YOU HAVE RIVEN AWAY AND ALL MY ROSES; YET IN SPITE OF YOU, THERE IS ONE CROWN I BEAR AWAY WITH ME

AND TONIGHT WHEN I ENTER BEFORE GOD, MY SALUTE SHALL SWEEP ALL THE STARS AWAY FROM THE BLUE THRESHOLD! ONE THING, WITHOUT STAIN, UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD, IN SPITE OF DOOM MINE OWN--!
FREEZE!
ONE MOVE AND YOU'RE HISTORY!
TAKE IT EASY, FELLAS.
I'M NOT TRYING ANYTHING CUTE...
...JUST REMOVING MY MASK...
...ONE OF MY MASKS.
DAREDEVIL!
YOU GOT A LOTTA EXPLAINING TO DO, MISTER!
AND I'LL BE GLAD TO DO IT, LIEUTENANT.
ALLOW ME THAT HONOR, MY OLD FOE!

A MOMENT AGO, YOU UNMASKED. NOW I SHALL PERFORM A SIMILAR GESTURE...
I AM, YOUR HUMBLE AND OBEDIENT SERVANT--
--THE JESTER!
AT YOUR SERVICE!
YOU DESERVE THE BOW. YOU WERE MAGNIFICENT.
INDEED!
I TRUST THE CRITICS WILL CHANGE THEIR TUNE.
OKAY, DAREDEVIL ... WHY? WHY'D YOU PLAY GAMES WITH US?
BECAUSE IF I HADN'T, YOU'D HAVE CLOSED HIS SHOW. THERE WAS NO NEED... HE WASN'T GOING ANYWHERE.
BESIDES, I FELT I OWED HIS PERFORMANCE TO THE MILLIONS WATCHING IT--
--TO THE JESTER HIMSELF... NOW THAT HE'S ACCOMPLISHED HIS DREAM, HE MAY NOT NEED CRIME.
AND MAYBE I OWED IT TO MYSELF.
DRAW THE CURTAIN, GENTLEMEN. THE DRAMA IS DONE.
END